

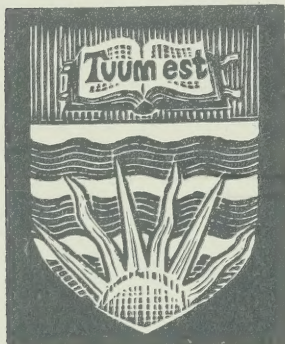
LOPE DE VEGA AND THE SPANISH DRAMA

J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly

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AND THE

SPANISH DRAMA

BEING THE

TAYLORIAN LECTURE (1902)

BY

JAMES FITZMAURICE-KELLY

GLASGOW: GOWANS & GRAY

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IT would be an overstatement to assert, in general terms, that the modern drama derives solely from the ecclesiastical miracle-plays ; but it is certain that in Spain, as in other European countries, the connection between church and stage was originally more or less close. Though ancient vernacular examples of the hieratic drama do not abound in Spain, it is beyond doubt that the popularity of ecclesiastical plays dates far back ; and, as it happens, the earliest specimen of the Spanish drama—which is also among the oldest monuments of Spanish literature—is the *Misterio de los Reyes Magos*. This liturgical piece, of which only a fragment survives, was produced in the Cathedral of Toledo towards the beginning of the thirteenth century. The feast of Corpus Christi, instituted by Urban IV. in 1264, was celebrated with special magnificence at Gerona, and extant

documents show that the expenses of staging such mysteries as *El Sacrificio de Isaac* and *La venta y sueño del patriarca José* were paid by Berenger de Palaciolo, who died in 1314. A *Representació de la asumpció de madona Santa María*, lately discovered by Father Joan Pié, is ascribed to the fourteenth century; and the celebrated *Misterio de Elche*, which is still given annually on the fourteenth and fifteenth of August, cannot well be dated later than the fifteenth century. It is reasonable to suppose that some, at least, of these primitive pieces are results of French influence propagated throughout Spain by the Cluny monks, and indeed it can be demonstrated that the *Misterio de los Reyes Magos* follows the Orleans rite. Possibly such subjects as the *Dispute entre l'âme et le corps* and the *Danse Macabré** were also utilized, though less frequently in Castile than in the other kingdoms of the peninsula. This would denote a slight infiltration of the profane element into the sanctuary.

* For the etymology of *Macabré*, see M. Gaston Paris's note in *Romania* (Paris, 1895), vol. xxiv., p. 129.

The lay theatre developed side by side with the liturgical drama. Though its earliest forms have perished, there is evidence of its existence at a remote date. Spanish historians, such as Lucas de Tuy, mention Albigensian refugees who acted in the public squares, and who held up the shortcomings of the clergy to the rabble's derision. A passage in the *Siete Partidas* of Alfonso the Learned implies that some unseemly pieces—*juegos de escarnio*—were even given in churches. These may be safely referred to a French origin. A more national tradition, inspired by the Spaniard Seneca, was revived by such Catalan writers as Antonio Vilaregut and Domingo Mascó, the latter of whom wrote a tragedy entitled *L'hom enamorat e la fembra satisfeta*, which was performed before Juan I. at Valencia in April 1394. It would seem as though this example was not widely followed in Castile. The passages of dialogue which are found in Berceo, in the Archpriest of Hita, and in that spirited political satire known as the *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo* are

interesting ; but they are dramatic neither in intention nor effect. It is otherwise with the celebrated *Diálogo entre el Amor y un Viejo* ; still it does not appear that this production by the converted Toledan Jew, Rodrigo Cota de Maguaque, was ever actually played. Nevertheless, we know that public representations must have been common before Cota's time, for chroniclers of the fifteenth century speak of *entremeses* and *momos* at high festivals. However, not till this fifteenth century is well advanced do we meet with the first Castilian dramatist whose name has reached us. Longfellow has enabled readers unfamiliar with Spanish to gather some impression of the plangent music which characterizes Jorge Manrique's dirge in memory of his father. They barely know the name of his uncle, Gómez Manrique, the author of two liturgical pieces—one on the Passion, the other on the Nativity—each of them distinguished for devotional simplicity and charm. To Gómez Manrique we also owe a play in which the Infanta Isabel acted as one of the Muses,

and thus this courtly soldier is the first to represent both the religious and secular drama in Spain.

Passing by the vivacious Fray Iñigo de Mendoza, whose *Auto del nacimiento* was perhaps played on a profane stage, we come to the anonymous *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, published about the end of the fifteenth century, and best known as the *Celestina*. This is a recognized masterpiece: but its unmanageable length—sixteen acts, afterwards amplified to twenty-two, and in some editions to twenty-three—nullified its theatrical qualities. A contemporary of the Jew Fernando de Rojas (to whom the *Celestina* is most frequently attributed, though M. Foulché-Delbosc dissents) was the patriarch of the *zarzuela*, Juan del Encina, a sweet and copious lyrical poet, whose eclogues are instinct with the dramatic spirit, and whose *Aucto del Repolón* suggests those later *entremeses* which are best represented by the brilliant farces of Cervantes and Quiñones de Benavente. A further step in dramatic evolution has been noted in the *Auto de la*

Pasión of Lucas Fernández : the progress is, however, slight. The next genuine impulse comes from without : from Bartolomé de Torres Naharro, apparently a roving Spanish soldier of fortune, who was captured by Barbary corsairs, and finally settled at Rome, where he took orders in 1513 or thereabouts. Occasionally, as in his *Diálogo del Nacimiento*, Torres Naharro is a mere imitator of Encina. But, as a whole, the volume of plays which he chose to call *Propalladia* is remarkable for its rare initiative and force. Here he gives us examples in both the realistic and the romantic drama : the *comedia á noticia* and the *comedia á fantasía*—the *Soldadesca* and *Tinelaria* on the one hand, the *Serafina*, *Himenea*, and *Aquilana* on the other. In each vein Torres Naharro excels by virtue of his craftsmanship—his solid construction, his appropriate, lively dialogue, his gift of persuasive presentation. No Spanish writer of his period matches him in dramatic power. He has, in a very high degree, the characteristics of a great leader. Yet, beyond the fact that he helped to draw the attention of

Spaniards to the Italian theatre—as in the case of Alonso de la Vega, whose *Comedia pródiga* owes as much to Italy as does the *Comedia de Sepúlveda*—the traces of Torres Naharro's influence are much fainter than we should expect. How came this to be so? Not, as has been assumed hitherto, because Spanish editions of the *Propalladia* were few; the work was reprinted at least five times in eighteen years—an exceptional success, in that age, for a book first issued abroad. We can but conjecture that Torres Naharro was too far in advance of his time, or (more likely) that his ingenuity overtaxed the limited mechanical resources of the Spanish stage. Still, as we find one of his metrical experiments—the combination of the hemistich with the twelve-syllabled *versos de arte mayor*—adopted in the *Auto da Feira* of the graceful Portuguese dramatist Gil Vicente (who often takes Spanish for his vehicle), it may prove that Torres Naharro found followers among the interminable file of playwrights recorded by Cañete, Aureliano Fernández-Guerra y Orbe, and Sr. Cotarelo y Mori. Thanks to these

eminent native scholars---and to M. Léo Rouanet---the manuscripts of those who wrote for the Spanish stage during the early sixteenth century are at last slowly struggling into print. But, as yet, to most of us these innumerable authors are little more than names.

We must await with patience the results of research, and be satisfied to speak of what we actually know. After Torres Naharro, the next prominent figure in the history of Spanish dramatic literature is Lope de Rueda, whom a constant tradition, sanctioned by the greatest of Spanish authors, regards as the founder of the popular theatre : on this point Cervantes and Lope de Vega are at one. Rueda, once a silver-beater in Seville, took to mumming, rose to be an *autor*---an impresario as well as an author---and led his company over the length and breadth of Spain from about 1554 till his death in 1565 or 1566. His pieces, printed in 1567, reveal him as a man of many talents, as an imitator of the Italians, as a shrewd satirist of his poor pre-

decessor Bartolomé Palau, as a keen observer of life, as a master of boisterous humour, and as the inventor of the bustling farces known as *pasos*.* These *pasos*, represented in open spaces of the town by an author who also happened to be an accomplished actor, raised the play to the dignity of a robust national institution. No such popular success was attained by Lope de Rueda's publisher and friend, the Valencian Juan de Timoneda, who has found a place in the history of literature on the supposition that he was among the first to essay the dramatic form of the *auto*. Sr. Cotarelo y Mori has shewn, however, that Hernán López de Yanguas anticipated Timoneda by almost half a century, and probably Yanguas had predecessors as yet unknown to us. In the next generation to Lope de Rueda Cervantes praises Naharro, of whom nothing remains beyond a late edition of his *Griselda*, which exists in a unique copy.

* See the most interesting introduction to M. Léo Rouanet's *Intermèdes espagnols du XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1897), for the history of the *pasos*, or *entremeses*, as they were called later.

A better fortune awaited Juan de la Cueva, a courageous innovator in the romantic drama. It would be difficult to overrate Cueva's historic importance. None of his work is perfect, none approaches perfection ; but his explorations in the picturesque domain of national history, his wholesome contempt for the conventional unities, his intelligent courage in experimenting, his suggestion of the *capa y espada* variety, his amalgam of the lyrical with the dramatic element combine to place him in the foremost line. He and Miguel Sánchez, the author of *La Isla bárbara* and *La Guarda cuidadosa*, are the pioneers of those new methods, which were soon to carry all before them; and, insomuch, they have a surer hold upon us than the younger Argensola, than the two literary soldiers Andrés Rey de Artieda and Cristóbal de Virués, or even than Cervantes, whose immortality was won in another sphere of literature. The essays of these dramatists have a value of their own, and it is not too much to say that some of Cervantes's *entremeses* in prose (written, as it happens, at a much later date)

are a match for the Falstaff scenes in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; but, in the main, all four accepted an exhausted convention, and, as all four opposed the developments with which Spain was shortly to be enriched, they must be regarded as open enemies of the national dramatic system. So far as this massive fabric can be considered as the work of one man, it is the work of him whom Cervantes, using a well-worn phrase, calls the *monstruo de naturaleza*—the portent of nature. This marvel was Lope de Vega. It would be a very serious matter if it were true, as has been alleged, that no one out of Spain remembers even the titles of six of Lope's plays. The reproach is surely exaggerated; but it may be admitted that in England, unfortunately, there is no wide knowledge of the man or of his wonderful achievement, and this fact alone is an excuse for reviewing the chief events of his life—a life rich in episodes as one of his own plays.

Lope Félix de Vega Carpio was born at Madrid on November 25, 1562. Biographers

declare that he was of noble descent. It may be so, but the great man himself loves to dwell upon his small beginnings, and, from a passage in his writings, it has been inferred that his father, Félix de Vega, was a simple basket-maker, who emigrated from the valley of Carriedo to Madrid. At any rate, the father's position in life was humble. We cannot take on trust the details of Lope's youth as recorded by his disciple—*su alumno y servidor*—Juan Pérez de Montalbán, whose account is often inaccurate, and sometimes intentionally misleading. Still, it is easy to believe that Lope's precocity was miraculous: that he composed verses before he could write, and that he bribed older boys with a share of his breakfast to take down the lines which he dictated. We have Lope's assurance that he was sent to the Colegio de los Teatinos, a much less fashionable school than the Jesuit Colegio Imperial where, according to his biographer, he was brought up. Perhaps there may be some foundation for Montalbán's story that Lope ran away from school with a friend, that the

couple were arrested at Segovia, and taken back to Madrid by the police. All that we learn of Lope, the man, makes it probable that Lope, the boy, was a scapegrace. It seems that his talent was recognized by the Bishop of Avila, who sent him to the University of Alcalá de Henares, and the bishop's kindness is commemorated in the *Dragontea*. There is no sign of Lope's name in the University calendars, and we can only guess that he was at Alcalá between 1576 and 1581. While there he met the heroine of his *Dorotea*, the Fílis of his early ballads. Her personality had hitherto been a puzzle: her mask has now dropped, and she is revealed to us as Elena Osorio, daughter of the impresario Jerónimo Velázquez. This was apparently Lope's first direct introduction to the stage. In 1582 he served at the Azores under the celebrated Marqués de Santa Cruz, and in 1583 he became secretary to the Marqués de las Navas, with whom he remained some four years. In 1585 he is praised in the *Galatea* of Cervantes, with whom he is found in 1585 and 1586 writing complimentary

verses for Pedro de Padilla and López Maldonado respectively.

At its worst, sonneteering is a harmless pastime, but it did not suffice for Lope. It has long been known that at this period of his life he was involved in serious difficulties. According to the pious and crafty Montalbán, Lope was concerned in a public brawl with a shady gentleman — *un hidalgo entre dos luces* — and, having wounded his opponent, he was exiled from the capital. This tale has not been verified, and it may have been forged by Montalbán to divert attention from the real facts. These are discreditable, to say the least. When not studying philosophy and mathematics Lope was usually to be found at the theatre, and it was at the theatre that he was publicly arrested in the afternoon of December 29, 1587, on a charge of uttering criminal libels against his Fílis (Elena Osorio) and her father, Jerónimo Velázquez. This is not the place to enter upon the details which have been recently disclosed to us. It is enough to say that

Lope was brought to trial, found guilty, and sentenced, on February 7, 1588, to exile from Madrid (and a circuit of five leagues) for eight years, to banishment from Castile for two years. It was further ordered that if he infringed the decree as regards Madrid, he should work out the remainder of his time at the galleys; and that if he infringed it as regards Castile he should suffer death. This severity might have cowed many men. Lope treated the court with the most flagrant contempt, bore himself like a typical cloak-and-sword hero. He condescended to withdraw to Valencia, a flourishing dramatic centre, where he wrote plays and made useful acquaintances; but his absence was very brief. Within two months he risked his head by returning to Madrid, and carrying off the daughter of Philip II.'s Royal King-at-Arms. A warrant for his arrest was instantly issued, and a company of *alguaciles* started in search of him. Finding the chase too hot he released Isabel de Urbina y Cortinas (whom he married by proxy on May 10, 1588), outstripped his pursuers, and, by May 29, was

safe on board the *San Juan*, which formed part of the Invincible Armada. Sceptics have doubted if he ever shared in this historic expedition, but there is no reason for rejecting his explicit statements on this head in the *Filomena* and the *Corona trágica*. Sailing up the Channel he used his manuscript verses in honour of Elena Osorio as gunwads, fought against the dragon Drake, lost his brother (so it is said) in action, and landed at Cádiz with the best part of *La Hermosura de Angélica*, a huge epic which he had written on board.

Shortly afterwards he returned to Valencia, whence he passed to enter the service of the fifth Duque de Alba, of whose household he was still a member as late as April, 1595. Subsequently we find him attached as secretary to other great nobles—the Marqués de Malpica, the lettered Marqués de Sarriá, who is best known (under his subsequent title of the Conde de Lemos) as the patron of Cervantes. Lope's first youth was now over, but the profligacy of his private life continued. In 1596 his wife died, and next year, as it

seems, he met the Camila Lucinda, to whom many of his sonnets are dedicated. Hitherto Lucinda's identity has been a mystery. There need now be no hesitation in accepting the conjecture made, independently of each other, by Dr. Pérez Pastor and Professor Rennert: that she was Marcela de Luján, mother of that gifted, wayward boy, Lope Félix del Carpio y Luján, and of Marcela, a charming poetess, to whom her father dedicated *El remedio en la desdicha* just before her profession as a Barefooted Trinitarian in 1621. In 1598 Lope de Vega married Juana de Guardo, and the fact that the lady's fortune—or, rather, her father's—had been made by selling pork is recorded by the saturnine Góngora in a sonnet which is compact of malignity and contempt. But it is fair to say that none of Lope's countless enemies seriously believed him to be a fortune-hunter, and in truth his father-in-law was the sorriest of misers. In 1605 Lope made acquaintance with that young Duque de Sessa, to whom, during a friendship which lasted for thirty years, he addressed so many of the mis-

chievous, unedifying letters which have amused and startled posterity. With all his outrageous follies, we must suppose the disorderly genius to have had glimpses of better things, and at whiles his aspiration for improvement expresses itself in odd forms. In 1609, though still a layman, he became a Familiar of the Holy Inquisition; but he evidently failed to conciliate all his foes, for in the December of 1611 an attempt was made on his life in the streets of Madrid. In 1612 he joined a quarrelsome literary society called the Academia Selvaje, forgot his glasses at one of the sittings, and borrowed Cervantes's spectacles, which he describes as being "like badly poached eggs." In August, 1613, Juana de Guardo died, and, in the following year, the widower was ordained priest. It might well be thought (as Ticknor thought) that time and many trials had tamed his restless spirit, and that at last he had found peace. Not so: his repentances, his abjections were passing moods. It would serve no good purpose to particularize the gross irregularities which brought shame

upon his grey hairs and his cassock. Every one knows that, after a short experience, Samuel Johnson declined Garrick's invitation to go behind the scenes. Unhappily for Lope, his existence was passed in the green-room, and he had not a spark of Johnson's dogged virtue. We can never forget it, the theatre was his life: when not writing for the stage he was acting a part. He must have suffered bitterly, the dishonoured man, under the tempest of epigrams, flouts and jeers with which the tribe of jealous, lesser wits beset him. Even the good-natured Cervantes joined in the outcry against the shameful spectacle of this elderly gallant in a gown. It is indescribably pathetic to watch the poor, fallen priest's efforts to save himself from perdition. Soon after his ordination he revolts at writing Sessa's love-letters, implores his patron for the love of God not to make him jeopardize his soul. And he stands his ground under circumstances of great difficulty. But not for long.

The year 1616 was calamitous for Lope. His son and namesake proved so uncon-

trollable that the distressed father was compelled to place him in a school of correction or reformatory. In this same year befell the fatal meeting with Marta de Nevares Santoyo. The cynical story of this adventure fed the gossips of the town. The vigilant, virtuous Góngora (who, as the chief of the *cultos*, naturally looked on Lope as his most dangerous opponent) was forthcoming with a lampoon that is still a model of scurrility, irony, and disdain. The hurricane of opprobrium, the shame of exposure would have overwhelmed any other man. Even Lope staggered under it. Yet he lived the hubbub down, and came into his own again—repute, respect, and admiration. It seems a mockery that iniquity should so triumph. But Nemesis can wait patiently. Within a short while Marta lost her sight and became insane ; and years afterwards the child of this sacrilegious union was destined to destroy Lope. But it would be odious to dwell on this—the last of the many scandals that degraded him while living, and that still tarnish his splendid name. Hence-

forward we see him, for a long term of years, reigning as the autocrat of Spanish literature, throwing off one masterpiece after another, dazzling all Spain with his creative power, the radiance of his imagination, and the inexhaustible ingenuity of his wit. For at least a quarter of a century he had such a succession of triumphs as no other man of letters has ever tasted. He defied public opinion by dedicating *La Viuda valenciana* to Doña Marta in 1620: he opposed the fashionable mode of *culteranismo*. But all things were forgiven to him! The gibes of Góngora and Villamediana had no effect. It was in vain that an envious man of genius like Ruiz de Alarcón, or a peevish pedant like Torres Rámila, vented their spite and rage. They broke their teeth upon the file: they were repaid in kind. There was never a more human genius than Lope: one more loyal to his friends, one readier to face his foes. And, perhaps, because of this lavish generosity and bravery, we are all prone—like his contemporaries—to sympathize with him, to pardon him, even when he least

deserves it. No assault could shake him. All that is known of his later years testifies to his unique position. We meet him in 1620-22 presiding at the feasts in honour of St. Isidore's canonization, conferring a prize on the boy Lope in whom he took so justifiable a pride, and introducing his successor Calderón to public notice with words of enthusiastic praise. In 1624 we find him at an *auto de fe*, where a wretched, crazy Catalan Franciscan was burned for heresy ; and that Lope's heart was not in this horrible business appears from his flippant remark to Sessa that the victim was "a low fellow, for this is the kind they burn." Perhaps no other living Spaniard would have dared to crack these jests in Madrid at the expense of the Inquisition -- to which he himself belonged. It is a commonplace that no man really believes in his religion until he can afford to joke about it. If this be a true test, then there can be no doubt that Lope de Vega's belief was sincere and profound; but there are other and better grounds for thinking so. In 1625 he joined the Congre-

gation of St. Peter, to which he became chaplain three years later ; and, in this post as in all others, he played his part to perfection, edifying all beholders by his pious works, his exemplary life. And from now till the last act, it is one unbroken crescendo of applause. Lope witnessed, so to say, his own apotheosis. He was one of the sights of Madrid. As he returned from the hospital, where he attended the sick and dying, men turned to look at him in the street ; women and children clustered round him to kiss his hand, to crave his blessing. His daily walk was as a royal procession : his portrait hung on the walls of palaces and cabins. So contemporaries tell us, and so we love to picture him in his august old age — the living symbol of all the might, and pride, and glory of heroic Spain.

The last months of his existence were troubled by two grievous trials, to which Montalbán alludes with an air of provoking reticence. We know at last what the trials were which struck Lope down in the plenitude of his fame and his happiness. His son,

Lope Félix, was drowned at sea; his youngest and favourite daughter, Antonia Clara, fled from home in circumstances which bespeak the blackest ingratitude to the illustrious father who doted on her. This retribution for his far-off sins broke Lope's heart. Brooding sullenly upon his sorrows, he sank into alternations of lethargy and despair, redoubled his pious practices, lashed himself with his discipline till the walls of his room were bespattered with blood, and awaited the end with morose impatience. On August 23, 1635, he wrote his last poems—a sonnet, and *El Siglo de oro*—laid aside his pen, was chilled, and took to his bed. Four days later, after observing to Montalbán that it is nobler to be good than great, he fell into the everlasting sleep. He was buried with such pomp as befits a Cæsar, the funeral train turning aside from the direct path to defile before the convent which his daughter, Sor Marcela de Félix, had entered fourteen years before. By his open grave the murmur of envy sank into abashed silence. All men felt that a great light had gone out. His

remains were laid in the vault beneath the high altar of St. Sebastian's Church in the Calle de Atocha, and there they rested till early in the last century. During one of the usual cleanings of the church the coffin was carelessly removed, and it was found impossible to identify it later. Hence, the precise spot where Lope's ashes now lie is unknown.

His celebrity, we have seen, was unparalleled in his own lifetime. The word Lope, as Quevedo tells us, became a synonym for every kind of excellence. All that his enemies could do was to make the worst of his open dissipations. They lost no opportunity, and they so far succeeded that, in an age when decorations were prodigally bestowed, they prevented his receiving the insignificant marks of official distinction: even the livings to which he was presented were paltry. It was better so. His genius was purely popular, and he could never have submitted gracefully to the restraints which bind a Court singer. He made a moderate fortune by his plays: he received princely sums—not only from Sessa, but—from other

admiring patrons. However, though his household was on a modest footing, he was always pressed for money. He gave without stint in charity, and he died poor. He had many afflictions to crush him ; yet he lived every day of his life, did the work of twenty men, and we cannot doubt that—on the whole—his long, tumultuous existence was a happy one. We see him in the ardour of aggressive youth, and watch him, still battling, in the zenith of his renown. But we like best to think of him under another aspect during the last decade of his career : composing master-pieces as easily as he breathed, and conscious that, after countless combats, the victory is his. We perceive him rejoicing in the calm autumnal splendour of his fame, but never more content than when playing with his children in the garden. It is a charming picture : the tiny house in the Calle de Francos, with its motto—

Parva propria, magna.

Magna aliena, parva.—

and the little garden with (as he smilingly

informs us) its fountain and its nightingale, its two trees, ten flowers, two vines, an orange-plant, and a musk-rose.

His fertility and constancy were prodigious. He wrote epics, novels, eclogues, epistles, sonnets, occasional verses, parodies; poems narrative and devout and historic; pastorals lay and sacred. He is the author of numerous ballads, which are among the richest treasures of the *romanceros*, and which would suffice to make the reputation of any lesser man. Scarron is remembered not least for three celebrated sonnets: * it tells its own tale that all three should be literal translations from Lope—and that Lope can afford not to claim them. His ambition was as boundless as his versatility. He was the first in Europe to write an operatic libretto, longed to win a name in history, and sought to be appointed official chronicler. He piqued himself on his epics, and looked

* (a) *Superbes monuments de l'orgueil des humains*; (b) *Un mont tout hérissé de rochers et de pins*; (c) *A l'ombre d'un rocher sur le bord d'un ruisseau*. The originals will be found in the 1634 edition of Lope's *Rimas humanas y divinas*, pp. 28, 5, and 36.

down upon his dramas as trifles—*cosas de entretenimiento*. He lived to know better, and we cannot be too grateful that circumstances drove him to cultivate unceasingly the art in which he had no equal. Yet the very volume of his production has terrified posterity. Fox was a most courageous reader, but even he blenched and began to make excuse when his nephew, Lord Holland, talked of introducing him to Lope's twenty-one million three hundred thousand lines. Hazlitt, in his *Table-Talk*, testily remarks:—"I hate all those non-sensical stories about Lope de Vega and his writing a play in the morning before breakfast. He had time enough to do it after." But had he? This depends on the laws of demand and supply which Lope, like the rest of the world, was forced to obey. As a matter of fact, there is no reason to suppose that Lope ever did write a play before breakfast; but there is solid ground for thinking that not once or twice, but oftener, he composed a play within twenty-four hours. He plainly tells us so in the *Égloga á Claudio*. He

reports it, in no spirit of arrogant boasting, as the humble truth; he simply accepted the fact that "long runs" were almost unknown in Spain, and he was easily equal to any conditions.

As to the number of his dramas, we likewise have Lope's own account of the matter, and this should be final. However, though there is no warrant for thinking that his report is deliberately exaggerated, it is evident that he had no skill in figures. In the *Peregrino en su patria* he supplies us with a list of his plays up to the end of the year 1603. By his reckoning the total is 230; by ordinary counting it is 219. In the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* of 1609 he mentions that he had then written 483 plays. In the *Oncena Parte* of his theatre, published in 1618, he speaks of 800 plays. This is clear enough as it stands. But it so happens that, during the same year, Lope issued a revised list of his pieces in the sixth edition of the *Peregrino*, and there he states that this corrected catalogue contains the titles of 462 plays. His arithmetic is

once more at fault ; his list contains only 333 titles. Assuming, however, that the number was really 462, how came he to omit the other 338 plays required to make up the total of 800 given in the *Oncena Parte* ? The discrepancy is so great that it can scarcely be due to a mere oversight. However this may be, all Lope's subsequent declarations support the view that the higher number was correct. In *Parte Quincena* of his theatre he asserts that he had written 900 plays up to 1620 ; in the *Vigésima Parte* of 1625 the number rises to 1070 ; and in the *Égloga á Claudio* of 1632, which contains the author's last word on the subject, the total is given as 1500. This total is corroborated by Montalbán in *Para Todos*, which also appeared in 1632 ; and four years later, in the *Fama póstuma*, Montalbán alleges that Lope wrote 1800 plays and over 400 *autos*. It would follow from all this that between 1625 and 1632, when Lope was over sixty years of age, he produced more than sixty plays a year ; and that between 1632 and 1635, when he was

over seventy years of age, broken in health and worn out with private sorrows, he wrote at the rate of a hundred plays a year. These figures are bewildering. It is true that Montalbán died insane within two years of publishing the *Fama póstuma*, and it is quite possible, as has been suggested, that his mind was already affected when he made his surprising statements. But his previous assertion tallies with Lope's, and nobody pretends that Lope was out of his wits. Perhaps there is little difficulty in believing that a man who could write sixty plays a year might spur himself to write a hundred in the same space of time. We need not presume to understand these difficult calculations. We are solely concerned with what has come down to us, and this is more than enough for the hardest student. It may be that some of Lope's plays exist with the names of other dramatists attached to them. He can spare them. As it is, we know the titles of more than 600 plays by Lope, but of these 178 are titles and nothing else. The existing remnant consists of 430 plays

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and some fifty *autos*. Among these are such early pieces as *Los hechos de Garcilaso de la Vega*, and *El verdadero amante* (written when the author was twelve, but re-touched later); and there are examples of his various manners at every stage. It is possible that some of his best plays are lost; yet we cannot conceive that only the worst have been preserved, and at least we have enough material to enable us to judge the range of his singular talent.

It is hard to say when Lope's dramatic gift was first recognised, but we know on the best authority that Cervantes abandoned the stage in 1587, and that soon afterwards—*luego*—the marvellous youth carried all before him. He began as an amateur, giving his plays to needy managers, and thinking it ungentlemanlike to be paid for them. Like Byron, he revised his opinion. From 1590 he had no rival in the theatre; but he continued to believe in his epics, and did not trouble to collect his dramatic pieces. These were a means of livelihood: they were not (so he imagined at this time) literature. *El*

Perseguido was the first of Lope's plays to be printed, and this was published in 1603 by an enterprising, unscrupulous bookseller at Lisbon. Lope seems to have taken no special interest in the issue of the first eight volumes of his theatre : at the most, his attitude was one of benevolent neutrality. He prepared for publication the ninth volume, which was printed in 1617 ; still, though by this time he had realised that his plays were no less valuable than his "serious works," his intervention was chiefly due to his desire to protect himself against pirates who printed his dramas in editions which teemed with absurd blunders. And he soon tired, for, though he wrote as copiously as ever, he himself printed no play after 1625. At the very end he seems to have repented of his negligence : he collected enough matter to fill two volumes, which were published posthumously.

It remains to examine the value of Lope's contribution to the theatre in which he is the greatest figure. He is commonly described as the founder of the national

drama, and, in a sense, the description is just. There were, as we know, hosts of playwrights in Spain before he was born, but their efforts were tentative : essays of great merit, and yet only essays. It is not clear that Lope had any intimate acquaintance with their work, and his allusions to his predecessors are mostly perfunctory. However, even if he had read them, he would still deserve the title which has been conferred on him ; for he created the Spanish theatre in its final perfect form. Building by inspiration, he builded better than he knew. One of the greatest practitioners in art, he was the poorest theorist in the world. In his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo** he presents a poetic summary of his doctrine. Montalbán, writing in 1632, says that the master had compiled a more elaborate treatise which was to appear shortly ; but, as this has vanished, we must rely on the curt exposition published twenty-three years

* An admirable edition of the *Arte nuevo* is given by M. Alfred Morel-Fatio in the *Bulletin hispanique* (Bordeaux, 1901), vol. iii., pp. 365-405.

earlier. Lope makes a show of quoting Aristotle, but all his learning is derived from Donatus and from Robertello d'Udine, the latter of whom was studied later by Corneille. It soon appears that Lope's professed admiration for classic doctrine is confined to words. He avows with effrontery that, when it comes to writing, he locks up Plautus and Terence—not because he disapproves of either, but because the public will have it so. He cannot follow Lope de Rueda ; for, though Rueda observed the rules of art, he brought low characters upon the scene, and so made broad farce of what should have been high comedy. Lope advocates unity of action : as to unity of time he enters the plea that, when Spaniards go to the play, they wish the panorama of the world to pass before them—from Genesis to Judgment Day. He notes that dramas were formerly in four acts—"went on all fours like children," is his phrase : he counsels condensation into three acts. Like Virgil, Ben Jonson, Quintana, Coleridge, and Mr. Yeats, he would have the maker write

his first draft in prose, and he emphatically recommends that the interest be kept alive by withholding the solution till the last possible moment. To this he adds a word concerning form: *décimas* should be used for plaints; the sonnet serves to indicate suspense; the *romance* suits narrative which may also (and perhaps more happily) be moulded into octaves; tercets are adapted for graver episodes, while nothing becomes a love-passage like the *redondilla*. He closes with the confession that, of the 483 plays which he had hitherto written, all but six were constructed in defiance of art; and, with this thrust at pedantry, he takes leave of the Madrid Academicians. Some earnest students have sought to identify the six plays of which Lope speaks; but surely it is plain that these six perfect ones never existed, that Lope does not attempt to make a case for himself, and that he comes as near banter as proper politeness to his hosts allows. It is perhaps as well. His genius was creative: it was as uncritical as Cervantes's own. Probably if his lost treatise were discovered

it would prove less valuable and effective than Tirso de Molina's bold apology for the new drama. Tirso, in the *Cigarrales de Toledo*, faces the issues, vindicates the new system, rejects the unities, justifies the mingling of comedy and tragedy, and formally acknowledges Lope as the *reformador de la comedia nueva*. It needed no courage to uphold the *comedia nueva* in 1624 : the battle was already decisively won.

Tirso ascribes to modesty Lope's avowal that, in leaving the old paths, he pandered to the vulgar. No doubt the position was embarrassing. Lope could not glorify the new drama without glorifying himself, and good taste may have kept him silent. He turned the difficulty by paying lip-homage to the conventional rules of poetics and dramaturgy, as these rules were understood during the Renaissance. But, in truth, he felt no interest in them, and it would have been strange if he had, for his glory had been won by scattering all these sterile dogmas to the winds. He was not to be tied down to such an absolute division or

styles and manners as had hitherto obtained. He put an end to the simple classification of plays as tragedies and farces : he conceived the *comedia* which fused the most diverse elements into one spacious whole, and by this invention he was enabled to represent his age, to enthrall his public, and to develop his own amazing powers. He wrought to such purpose that the path which he cut out for himself, and by himself, became the main road. He pictured contemporary modes and humours with unflagging vivacity and unshrinking truth. He opened up the treasures of historic legend, transforming indistinct types and hard automata into living beings, all touched with something of his own urbanity. He created character, he enchanted with his transcripts of emotion and passion, he excelled in fancy, in ingenuity, and in the chivalrous courtesy which led him to make his heroines the most delightful in the world. In the *Fama póstuma* Montalbán tells us that Lope would never suffer anyone to speak depreciatingly of women, and we should have guessed as much from the

evidence of his plays. And, in addition to all this, he captivated by the brilliance of his treatment. There is nothing in the methods of his successors which amounts to a new departure. Calderón himself does not attempt to rival his master's constant wealth of metrical design; a design so elaborate in ornamentation that, as Chorley has said, "one knows not which to admire most—the taste of a populace which this fine workmanship was made to please, or the mastery of invention and language required to produce it with such ease and abundance." * Nowhere is there a trace of effort, and, if we regard Lope's work as a whole, we shall marvel at its high level of excellence.

That it has many defects is true: it could not be otherwise in so vast a structure. The Euphrates, says Callimachus, is a mighty river; but it bears all the dead dogs of Babylon to the sea. The typical Spaniard of his age, Lope incarnates all

* See J. R. Chorley, *Notes on the National Drama of Spain* in *Fraser's Magazine* (London, 1859), vol. lx., p. 59,

Spain's weakness as he incarnates her strength. He has the southern tendency to be content with broad sweeping effects. He improvizes with a speed and copiousness which do not allow of unvarying and minute perfection. Such plays as *Roma abrasada* and the *Comedia de Bamba* are wholly unworthy of him. There are unmistakable signs of carelessness in one scene upon another, and, though his autographs prove that he was ruthless in revising, he did not escape disasters. Thus, in the third act of *La Niña de plata*, he seems to mistake the names of his characters, assigning to the niece Dorotea speeches which should obviously be delivered by her aunt Teodora, and to Teodora lines which should clearly be spoken by Dorotea. This last example suggests a probable explanation of many blemishes in Lope's theatre. His pieces were constantly printed without his permission, and, as he declares in *El Peregrino en su patria*, they were so travestied in this process that their author often failed to recognize them at sight. For one line of

his own, he protests, they contain a hundred by some one else. This is credible enough to those who know how these pirated copies were obtained. The chief culprit seems to have been a certain Luis Ramírez de Arellano, who undertook to supply publishers with the text of any piece after three hearings. It is not surprising that, on one occasion, the famous actor Sánchez refused to go on with Lope's *Galán de la Membrilla* until Ramírez de Arellano was turned out of the pit. This person was *Gran Memoria*, and there must have been more than the one *Memorilla* of whom Lope tells us—men quick to learn a few verses in each act, to fill in the rest with their own vapid wit, and to sell their detestable concoction to provincial managers who then played the piece all over Spain as a *comedia famosa* by the Phœnix, Lope de Vega. But this excuse is not always available. Lope took a most inartistic joy in a mere *tour de force*. *El Arauco domado* is a case in point. It scarcely deserves the severity of the younger Moratín's reproaches, if we remember that it

was dashed off in reply to a direct challenge thrown down by Belmonte Bermúdez, Guillén de Castro, Mira de Amescua, Ruiz de Alarcón, Vélez de Guevara, and four others who combined to produce a play which should be as a manifesto of revolt against Lope's suzerainty. *El Arauco domaaó* is his answer to the daring nine who had proclaimed themselves the foremost writers of the time— "in spite of envy." And from a personal point of view, the answer was a triumph, for it chased the rival piece from the boards. A too frequent repetition of these victories has cost Lope dear.

It may be asked whether he possesses the magical quality of distinction. Now, it is sometimes argued that Spanish literature, as a whole, is lacking in distinction. This is a hard saying. Distinction does not abound to excess in any modern literature. Still, as regards Spanish, it is found in each vehicle, in writings dealing with every subject—in poetry or prose, in devout works, in history, and in fiction. Santillana has it in half-a-dozen songs ; Hurtado de Mendoza has it in

the *Guerra de Granada*; it is present even in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. The mystics are rich in it. Juan de Valdés and Luis de León have it in a high degree. Santa Teresa has it no less than Madame de Sévigné. In the next literary generation distinction is a less constant note. Cervantes and Góngora have it at times; Cervantes, when the Knight himself speaks: Góngora, before the demon of *culteranismo* possessed him. We may say the same of Lope. At his best he is eminently distinguished and, though he condescends to *culteranismo*,—even in such plays as *Los Tellos de Meneses*,—he sins against the light. At heart he never made the blunder of confounding distinction with mannerisms, mincings, and affectations, and he never loses himself for any length of time. When he chooses, he can be as simple, strong, direct, and lofty as any writer in Spain; sublime as Calderón, without any of the flamboyant preciousness which mars many of Calderón's best passages.

But, after all, it is as a great inventor that Lope must be honoured. He imagined

that he was the first to place upon the boards the *gracioso* or *figura del donaire*—a character which is actually found in Torres Naharro eighty years earlier. Still, he humanized the sketches of his forerunners to such an extent that his alert, vital humour evolved a new type which amounts, in fact, to an independent creation. It has been asserted that “nowhere throughout the Spanish drama can you find a character.” Shakespeare, of course, stands alone. But I agree with Chorley in thinking that, with this single exception, the Spanish character-plays are a match for those produced by any theatre in the world. In this kind Lope’s *Perro del hortelano* and his *Esclava de su galán* speak for themselves. He has, too, the sombre gift of tragedy, as shown in *Las Paces de los Reyes*, in *La Estrella de Sevilla*, in *La Fianza satisfecha*, where Leonido is a figure no less impressively terrible than the figure of Don Juan himself. Read him in *Peribañez y el Comendador de Ocaña*, or in *Fuenteovejuna*, or in *Los Comendadores de Córdoba*, and you will have

revealed to you the full breadth and depth of his wondrous power. Read *El Rey Don Pedro en Madrid*, a piece often ascribed to Claramonte, or to Tirso, or to Calderón, and you will realize the inexhaustible resources of the dramatist who can spare so much to make the reputation of others without any appreciable loss to himself.

Consider a moment how poor would be the world's theatre were it deprived of Lope's capital. It was once the fashion to say that he dropped out of vogue the moment he died, and it is true that his place was taken (though not filled) by Calderón. But his memory was perpetuated in other ways ; mostly by imitations. During his own lifetime his wealth had been discovered by Sainte-Beuve's favourite, Rotrou, and it may be well to note here that a large proportion of Rotrou's plays are simple adaptations from Lope : *La bague d'oubli* is from *La sortija del olvido*, *Laure persecutée* is from *Laura perseguida*, *Saint-Genest* is from *Lo verdadero fingido*, the *Heureux naufrage* is from *El Naufragio prodigioso*. Never was a repu-

tation won more cheaply. And in Molière Lope found a far more eminent follower than Rotrou. Had Lope not written *El mayor imposible* and *La discreta enamorada* we should not have the *École des maris* as we have it now ; had he not written *El Acero de Madrid* and *La Niña boba* we should not have the *École des femmes* as we have it now ; had he not written *Los melindres de Belisa* we should not have *Les Femmes savantes* as we have it now. *Tartufe* bespeaks a careful study of *El Perro del hortelano* ; and the *Médecin malgré lui* proves that Molière found in *El Acero de Madrid* enough material to furnish him with a second play. Sometimes the loan is made through a nimble intermediary. For example, in *L'Amour médecin*, Molière doubtless believed that he was plundering Cyrano de Bergerac's *Pédant Joué* ; he could scarcely know that the *Pédant Joué* was taken from Lope's *Robo de Elena*. It would be as idle as it would be easy to draw up a list of profitless loans by D'Ouville, Boisrobert, and others, but it is worth mentioning that, as Corneille's

Don Sanche d'Aragon derives from Lope's *Palacio confuso*, so his admirable *Suite du Menteur* is based upon Lope's *Amar sin saber á quien*. Lastly, it should not be forgotten that *The Young Admiral* of Shirley, the last of the great English dramatists, and one rightly praised for the originality of his plots, is suggested by Lope's *Don Lope de Cardona*.

If Lope has left this mark on foreign literatures, it may well be imagined how deep and wide is his influence at home. Vélez de Guevara made a considerable reputation with *Los celos hasta los cielos*: an excellent play indeed, but, as it happens, adapted from *La desdichada Estefania* of Lope. Few dramatists have a higher fame than Rojas Zorrilla, and few deserve it more completely. Still, it is plain that his masterpiece *Del Rey abajo ninguno* owes much to Lope's *Peribañez y el Comendador de Ocaña* and to Lope's *Villano en su rincón*. Take a writer like Moreto, famous all the world over for his wit and grace. That Moreto's dexterity as an adaptor was recognised in

his own generation is manifest from Jerónimo de Cáncer's well-known epigram :—

Que estoy minando imagina
 Cuando tu de mi te quejas ;
 Que en estas comedias viejas
 He hallado una brava mina.

But now-a-days perhaps few realize that Moreto lives, in great part, on the crumbs from Lope's table. His *Cómo se vengan los nobles* is taken from Lope's *Testimonio vengado*, his *Príncipe perseguido* from Lope's *Gran Duque de Moscovia*, his *Eneas de Dios* from Lope's *Caballero del Sacramento*, his *No puede ser* from Lope's *El Mayor imposible*, his *Adúltera penitente* from Lope's *Prodigio de Etiopia*, his *Travesuras del estudiante Pantoja* from Lope's *Entremés del letrado*, his *El mejor Par de los doce* from Lope's *Las Pobrezas de Rinaldos*, and his *De fuera vendrá quien de casa nos echará* from Lope's *De cuando acá nos vino*. . . . The list is striking ; but it leaves Moreto in undisturbed possession of that fine achievement in comedy, *El desdén con el desdén*. It would be odious to attempt to deprive Moreto of a brilliant

play which, perhaps more than any other, testifies to the suppleness of his talent. Yet, in the interest of historical truth, it may be well to recall what Schaeffer has already pointed out : * namely, that *El desdén con el desdén* is a most masterly *pastiche*. The heroine, who hates men from what she has read of them, is taken from Lope's *La Vengadora de las mujeres*; the devices of the suitors come from Lope's *De cosario á cosario*; the stratagem of the successful lover occurs in Lope's play, *La hermosa fea*; and the servant is simply transferred from Lope's *Milagros del desprecio*. It is difficult to conceive how Moreto's flattery of Lope could have taken a sincerer form.

There remains in the Spanish drama one great figure, a superb poet who has often been set up as a rival to Lope de Vega. This is not, as one might expect, Tirso de Molina, whose claims are considerable as the author of *El Burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de piedra*, of that grand historical drama *La*

* See Adolf Schaeffer's *Geschichte des spanischen National-dramas* (Leipzig, 1890), vol. ii., pp. 158-159.

Prudencia en la mujer, of that moving and terrible play *El Condenado por desconfiado*, and a dozen more examples of conspicuous genius. It is Calderón, the youth whom Lope first introduced to public life. As no writer has had stauncher admirers than Calderón, so none has had greater reason to deplore the indiscretion of his friends. It is difficult for us to imagine Frederic von Schlegel declaring that "in this great and divine master the enigma of life is not merely expressed but solved;" or August von Schlegel laying it down that "Calderón is not merely the first of Spanish dramatists, but so much above all others that, far from speaking of a rival, there is none fit to be ranked as second to him." Since the Schlegels' day we have travelled far, but the immediate effect of these dithyrambics was considerable. Goethe himself had been betrayed into praising Calderón's *Hija del aire*, which Sr. Menéndez y Pelayo very rightly describes as "a dramatic monstrosity." But, after the first moment of rapture, the critical instinct reasserted itself in Goethe, and led him to note the infinite

mischief wrought by this blind worship of the Spanish poet, whose characters, as he observes, are as much alike as cannon balls or leaden soldiers, all cast in the same mould. It is true that Goethe was not deeply read in Calderón, but he had at least as ample a knowledge of Calderón's plays as the Schlegels had of Lope's: and, foreigner as he was, his keen perception caused him to lay his finger on Calderón's weakness precisely as the acute Luzán had done more than half a century earlier. It would be uncritical to deny that Calderón was—not only a splendid lyric poet, but—a most accomplished master of stagecraft and every dramatic device. Still, between this marvellous cleverness and the creation of character—which, after all, is the dramatist's chief concern—there is a wide interval. Even in England, where Calderón has found translators of genius in Shelley and FitzGerald, the word of warning was uttered by the right man in the right place. No foreigner has ever had a more exact and informed knowledge of the Spanish drama than was

possessed by John Rutter Chorley, whose admirable articles are a final statement of the real position. Writing nearly half a century ago in *The Athenæum*,* Chorley pointed out that, as regards the Spanish drama, Calderón “found it already developed, and arrived in many directions at a point of excellence which he might equal, but could not hope to excel.” In other words, Calderón came into the field too late : he could only proceed upon the lines laid down by Lope, and produce variants of Lope’s work.

Calderón was fortunate in the circumstances of his life. His reputation was greatly promoted by the accident of his official rank, and by the fact that a pious editor (an imitator of Lope) collected the works of the fashionable court-dramatist. But it is beyond doubt that Calderón’s professional connection with Philip IV., his complacence in supplying pieces which were mere excuses for splendid spectacles, and his own natural tendency to allegories

* No. 1361, November 26, 1853.

which were occasions for illustrative treatment, all combined to degrade the Spanish theatre. It was disastrous for him that his worst pieces were those most favoured by his kingly patron : that his *Príncipe constante* passed almost unnoticed in high places, while he was decorated with the Order of Santiago for *Los tres mayores prodigios*, a feeble masque borrowed from Lope's *Laberinto de Creta* and ruined in the conveyance. It is characteristic of Lope that he should have opposed the spectacular drama from the outset. "Four trestles, four boards, two actors, a passion : " and he undertook to supply the rest. It is equally characteristic of Lope that, though he himself gave the sword-and-cloak play its final form, he is less constantly inclined to practise it than is Calderón : possibly because in this *genre* character counts for less than episode and incident. In a very different province of the drama, as a writer of *autos*, Calderón's superiority to Lope is incontestable ; and yet even Calderón might not disdain to sign *El Auto de los cantares*, *La Siega*, and *Del*

pan y del palo. Still, it must be frankly admitted that Lope's *autos* are not distinguished by the exquisite combination of mysticism, philosophic subtlety and allegory, in which the younger man is supreme. But as Calderón overtops Lope as a metaphysical and allegorical poet, so he falls short of Lope's success in the religious drama on a grander scale. Where in Calderón shall we find aught to set against Lope's *Fianza satisfecha*? As for invention, no other great poet borrows so extravagantly as Calderón: plots, lines, stanzas, acts entire. Many will remember that he introduces Escribá's celebrated verses—*Ven, muerte, tan escondida*—in *Manos blancas no ofenden*, and again in *El mayor monstruo los celos*. It is less generally known than the magnificent ballad—*¡Ay verdades! que en amor*—which adorns Calderón's *Conde Lucanor*, is from Lope's pen. But I shall not enter on the endless task of indicating all Calderón's debts to Lope; if I mention a few of his debts to another great dramatist it will suffice to disprove Schlegel's assertion that Calderón

was far too rich to borrow. Too rich to borrow! What are the facts? That Calderón's *A secreto agravio secreta venganza* derives from Tirso's *Celoso prudente*, that his *El secreto á voces* is from Tirso's *Amar por arte mayor*, that his *Encanto sin encanto* is from Tirso's *Amar por señas*, and that the second act of *Los cabellos de Absalón* is copied almost word for word from Tirso's *Venganza de Tamar*.* No doubt the notions of literary morality current in the seventeenth century were looser than those of to-day, and at any period such borrowings are justified, or at least excused, by success. But Calderón's success is intermittent. The *autos* are essentially undramatic; and, if we set aside as exceptions, *El Alcalde de Zalamea* (in which Lope counts for much) and *No siempre lo peor es cierto*, it will be found that Calderón is seldom capable of maintaining the interest through-

* It is curious to observe that Tirso's *Venganza de Tamar* was reproduced in an abbreviated form, and with unimportant additions, under the name of Felipe Godínez. The fact is recorded in a *Notice* prefixed to the translations published by M. Léo Rouanet, *Drames religieux de Calderón* (Paris, 1898), p. 15.

out a whole play. Incomparably brilliant in individual scenes, he is condemned to frequent failures, inasmuch as he follows what is on the point of becoming a petrified formula. His wonderful ingenuity, his technical accomplishment, his mellifluous eloquence, cannot be overpraised; but they do not vitalize to half the purpose of Lope's instantaneous vision, his faculty of dramatic creation, his wide human sympathies, his debonair, fantastic humour. In Calderón we have the great court-poet, portraying with phrases of suave preciousness the conventional emotions of a single social class; in Lope we have the great popular poet expressing deeper, more elemental passions, in vigorous forms of his own design.

With Calderón the history of the Spanish drama may close. His long life covered the period of its brightest splendour and the first stages of its decline. He found it golden and left it silver. But fortune was always constant to him. Lope de Vega and the dramatists of his generation were to be read mostly in rare and wretched editions. The lucky

court-poet was accessible in purer texts which found, as they deserved to find, numerous admirers. Late in the eighteenth century, when the French fashion was at its height, when the destructive criticism of Luzán and Moratín had completed the ruin of the old national theatre, when Lessing himself was mistaking Montiano y Luyando for an important figure—even then some few plays by Calderón survived the wreck. Moreto, too, was represented on the Madrid stage. Though Lope and Tirso were surely not forgotten by all their countrymen, they had fallen out of popular favour. Yet Lope's name still echoed in foreign countries. We know that Metastasio admired him, that Lessing was astounded at his variety, his amalgam of the tragic and comic, his independence of the schools. And in Spain itself the revival of Lope's popularity began through the humble efforts of Cándido María Trigueros, a most indifferent writer who, after failing as an original dramatist, succeeded with his arrangements of Lope's *Moza de cántaro* and *El Anzuelo de Fenisa*,

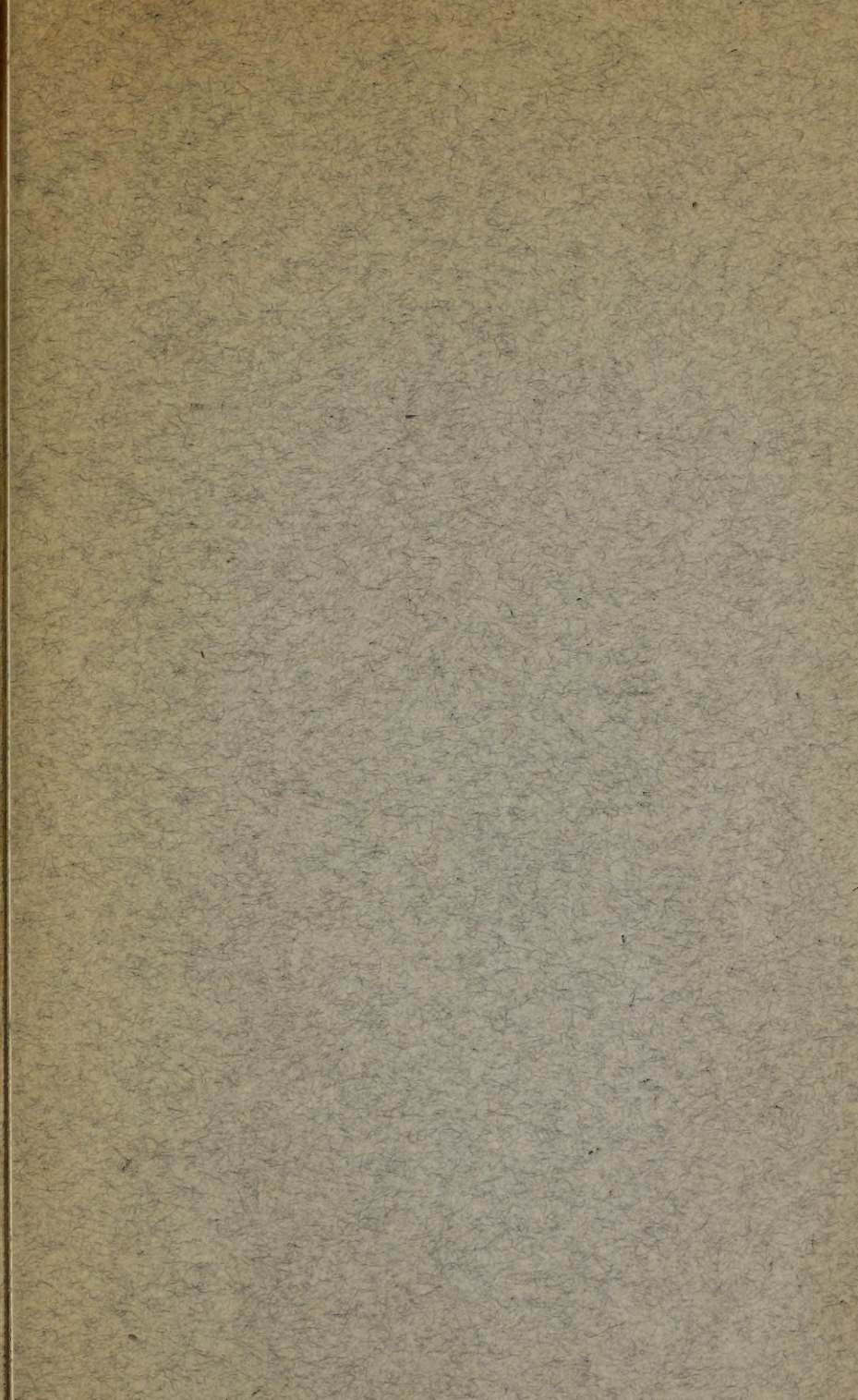
and at last produced an excellent play by recasting Lope's *Estrella de Sevilla* as *Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas*. It was unnecessary for Trigueros to have introduced passages which make Lope appear even more monarchical than he really was ; still, this was a less grave fault than that committed by Dionisio Solís, who actually undertook to convert Lope, the born *romantique*, into a classic of the strict French school.

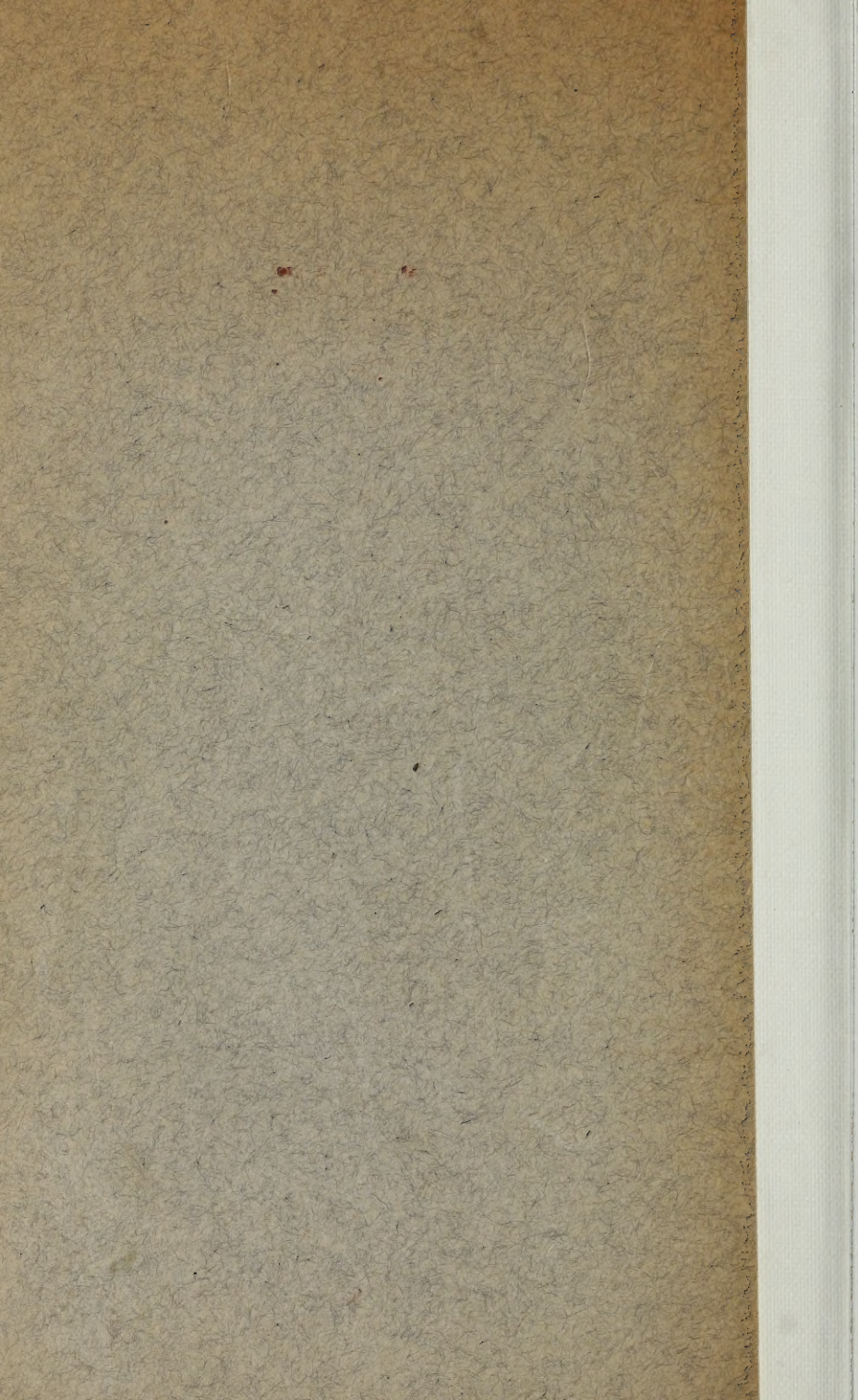
Yet the very substitution of Solís's *Niña boba* for Lope's *Dama boba* was to the good inasmuch as it served to awaken interest in the original. Thenceforward men like Durán, Lord Holland, George Henry Lewes, John Rutter Chorley, Grillparzer have, in varying degrees, contributed to re-establish Lope in his ancient sovereignty. From the middle of the nineteenth century Lope's star has waxed as Calderón's has waned. The publication of la Barrera's biography has quickened general interest in the personality of the great enchanter. Many points in the romantic story of Lope's career are still obscure, and upon these it is safe to say that

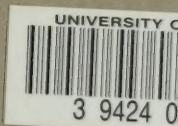
much light will be thrown in the elaborate biographical study which we may shortly expect from the well-known Spanish scholar, Professor Hugo Albert Rennert, of the University of Pennsylvania. The monumental edition of Lope's complete works, now being issued by the Spanish Academy, under the direction of Sr. D. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, the chief and master of all Spanish students, indicates a complete revolution in opinion and taste. And there are other symptoms no less significant. In France an eminent expert like M. Morel-Fatio spends a wealth of learning on an edition of the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*. In Italy Lope's plays and fugitive pieces are illustrated by the commentaries of scholars like Restori and Mele. In Austria and Germany the illuminating erudition of investigators like Farinelli, Hennigs, Gunthner, Albert Ludwig, and Wurzbach supplies us with critical monographs and appreciations of inestimable value. There is even some slight danger that, in the future, Lope may be unduly over-praised

as he was unduly belittled in the eighteenth century. But no such peril threatens in England. It is discouraging to note that, in the long list of recent publications concerning Lope, our contribution is next to nothing. Indifference to so imposing a representative of a rich and varied literature is assuredly no matter for pride. The one remedy for those who do not appreciate Lope is to read him. To attack the huge library of dramatic literature which he has bequeathed us is an enterprise calling for courageous perseverance during years. The result will repay the effort. If, on the one hand, the man who reads with care all Lope's surviving plays is inevitably condemned to read little else, on the other hand, such a reader has before him the certainty of being interested, moved, and delighted for no small part of a life-time. He will learn to know a genius, unequal indeed, but never dull ; he may be exhausted by Lope's indefatigable cleverness, but he will never weary of his author's company. He will see pass before him the entrancing pageant of a van-

ished age, a society vivid, picturesque, noble, blazoning its belief in God, the King, the Point of Honour, as imperious realities governing the conduct of an entire nation ; he will meet with personages of all grades, presented in every circumstance from the most tragic to the most laughable, and he will make acquaintance with a score of heroines as fair and gracious as Rosalind or Beatrice. I invite you to make the trial. And I confidently anticipate that here, as in other countries, the verdict of all who have thus qualified themselves to pronounce judgment will be unanimous. It will surely declare that literary history reveals no more interesting personality than Lope de Vega : that this great poet was also the mighty inventor of an original form, that he was a consummate expert in dramatic creation, with no equal in his own country, and—save Shakespeare only—no superior elsewhere.







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